

JUNG'S CONCEPTION OF THE STRUCTURE OF PERSONALITY IN RELATION TO PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

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I WONDER at my own temerity in daring to handle this theme in the discussions of this Society. Firstly, because I am not adequately informed with regard to what has already been published by our Society in this special field of research. Secondly, because I am not altogether clear what bearing Jung's conception of personality has to do with your investigations. With these rather formidable obstacles in my path, I find myself uncomfortably aware of my incompetence.

In regard to the main structural principle of quaternity, which forms the basis of Jung's conception of personality, I can assume that this is generally known. The four main psychic functions appear empirically in dream and fantasy material as the four pillars of the house, or as the four cardinal points of the psychical universe. The problem of individuation invariably begins with this foundation as the groundwork of the idea of totality. The fact that these four main functions, thinking, feeling, intuition and sensation, never appear in any human subject in a state of equally balanced functioning, is bound up with the unavoidable one-sidedness of conscious development. To analytical investigation the psyche appears as a complex molecular formation, containing the generally human qualities, functions, and instinctual strivings in a more or less integrated combination. Theoretically, we cannot escape the conclusion that every individual contains all the generally human elements, and that what constitutes the uniqueness of individuality is the particular grouping or combination of elements within the individual molecule. It must also be self-evident that in one individual these elements will be more stable and harmoniously integrated than in another. Because there exists no human striving which is not countered and opposed by its opposite, it follows that the central striving for unity or integration encounters an almost equal tendency towards dissolution or disintegration. In general it is possible to allocate the positive quality of integration to the function of consciousness, and its opposite tendency, that of dissolution or dissociation, to the autonomous or unconscious psyche.

We have to remind ourselves at this juncture that the duality of the mind, *i.e.* consciousness versus the unconscious, must not be conceived statically or structurally, but rather as a condition that is constantly undergoing change. What is conscious at this moment may be unconscious to-morrow, or in an hour's time; and what is unconscious now may, at some future moment, become conscious. But although mental contents are constantly changing from one sphere to the other, the condition we call conscious can, none the less, be represented as a more or less integrated field. The condition of mental contents in the unconscious, on the other hand, is rather that of fishes or marine organisms existing in a more or less dissociated and fluid state in a dark and essentially primitive underworld.

This inherent duality is not as a rule admitted or understood by the scientific investigator and this is the primary cause of that obstinate mental opacity which still makes it necessary for us to attempt to prove a number of facts which are, psychologically speaking, self-evident. In everyday experience with patients, for instance, the incidence of telepathy is in no sense a supernormal occasion. The synchronous apprehension of the same fact, word, experience, idea by two people either intimately involved or potentially related, is hardly a matter of special comment. The activation of the unconscious during analysis seems to favour this primitive or instinctual operation of the mind.

When I spoke of the condition of the unconscious or autonomous psyche as essentially primitive, I was alluding to the fact that the basic premisses and modality of expression of the unconscious are characteristically those of the primitive mind. Civilised consciousness, for instance, has accepted reason as its ruling principle. It seeks to see and plan ahead. It aims at adaptation, relatedness, regularity and integration. It believes in caring for the whole and in safeguarding relations to the objective world. In pursuing this reasonable policy consciousness tends to exclude the irrational and ignore the unpredictable. In its totalitarian attitude of control towards every factor within its peculiar framework of time, space and causality, rational consciousness is even inclined to deny the existence of things and events which, by their nature, are antipathetic to its rational structure, and to hold as unreal everything which appears irrational. Since the numinous experience (*i.e.* an overwhelming psychical tendency or experience of an irrational kind) cannot be fitted into any plan, the rationalist will tend to deny its reality. Similarly because a dream, vision or hallucination happens outside the sense of time, at no particular place, while its causality is obscure, these are also regarded as merely imaginary and of no

particular significance. The events that are liable to take place in a mediumistic séance are also subject to the same prejudice, since they cannot easily be roped into the time, space and causal compound.

Thus we see that the structure of our rationally controlled personality is such that the fundamentally irrational or primitive nature of autonomous psychic activity is sensed as alien and suspect and, therefore, must be as far as possible excluded. When it is seen that this dualism of the mind rests upon the existence of antipathetic premisses, it will be understood that the scientific mind can become attuned to the alien character of autonomous events only through submitting, either willingly or unwillingly, to the experience of the other side of the mind. But since even the most complete rationalist has at some time in his life been a child, has presumably dreamed, and is, moreover, subject to the unpredictable and irregular factors of experience as much as everyone else, it is clear that something more is needed than the mere fact of experience. Consciousness has not only to participate in, it has also to value the experience as significant. The physicist Helmholtz, for example, is reported to have said: "Neither the testimony of all the Fellows of the Royal Society, nor even the evidence of my own senses, could lead me to believe in the transmission of thoughts from one person to another independently of the recognised channels of sensation." Similarly, an eminent colleague of mine, belonging to the mechanistic school of psycho-analysis, when asked by a friend, who was observing the analyst's delight in whirling a stick between his fingers, whether he was free to waggle the stick he held in his hand in any direction he chose, replied: "Naturally I have the feeling of freedom, but I know it to be an illusion".

Everyone must have observed numberless parallel examples of the way in which the confirmed rationalist continually prejudges his actual experience in accordance with the demands of certain theoretical preconceptions. It is as though he felt a perpetual need to sterilise his mind from any possibility of a sympathetic understanding of the opposite principle. The totalitarian type of consciousness is, as we know from bitter experience, deeply averse from admitting the independent activity of any elements beyond the scope of its control.

I must confess that it seems to me as unprofitable to attack this curious blindness by argument and demonstration as it is to try and convince the savage mind of Africa of the irrationality of witchcraft, or the mind of Nazi Germany of the stupidity of its totalitarian prejudices. A scientific colleague of mine told me of an attempt he made to persuade an intelligent African chief of the wrongheadedness

of his belief in witchcraft by the direct means of a post-mortem demonstration of the lungs of a man who had died of tuberculosis. He pointed out the nature of the disease by contrasting it with normal lung tissue and the demonstration was clear and incontestable. But the intelligent African, with the polite smile of superior knowledge, replied: "You see now how this man was bewitched."

We come, then, to two fundamentally contradictory modes of explaining the nature of human events. The civilised mind operates from the postulate of natural cause; the savage from that of witchcraft or, in other words, the power of the wish. Assuming the self-evident superiority of the rational standpoint, we are all, to some extent, infected with the belief that the primitive mode of explanation is the product of ignorant superstition. The affirmation: "I am right" includes the presumption: "You are wrong".

At bottom it is the absolutist claim of either principle which confounds understanding. So long as any attitude claims to be absolute, intelligence is imprisoned within its prescribed limits and no further understanding is possible.

Our objective, scientific way of approach is the result of a prolonged and exhaustive investigation into the nature of the objective universe. In the Middle Ages, it was still possible for men of the finest intelligence to project the contents and processes of the unconscious into matter, because at that time the nature of matter was fundamentally mysterious. When we try to follow the alchemical quest of the medieval philosophers, we get lost and bewildered in the almost inextricable confusion of chemical procedures and of psychical or spiritual admixtures which seem to us to vitiate the whole method of approach. For them chemistry provided the field into which the psychical processes of individuation were projected.

The science of chemistry finally succeeded in reducing the material matrix to its elements, and in so doing it revoked the psychical projections into the unconscious. Yet the essential psychological goal which created alchemy was not, thereby, satisfied. It survives still in the unconscious, appearing to-day in that central striving for totality Jung has called individuation.¹ In the same way the science and technical means of astronomy penetrated the starry vault of heaven which had previously invited the projections of the gods and the whole astrological cosmogony. But the quest of the supra-personal determinants of human fate, which had in fact created astrology and the celestial home of the gods, is not fulfilled by the

¹ The reader is referred to Jung's discussion of alchemy in his recent work, *The Integration of Personality* (Kegan Paul & Co., London), 1940.

objective discoveries of astronomy. The quest still survives, although it has been shifted back from the objective into the psychological sphere.

It is as though the civilised mind having, to a large extent, conquered the realm of matter, by reducing it to known and predictable laws, is now faced with the vast and terrifying forces of primitive unreason which it succeeded in expelling from its rationally ordered universe. It is indeed undeniable that the unconscious of civilised man has become dangerously overcharged, and we have at present no adequate means of handling those irrational contents which the scientific *Weltanschauung* detached from their objective matrix and repressed into the unconscious. Thus, on the one side, stands the force of reason, intellect, and law-abiding conformity. On the other, we see the forces of the pagan and quasi-primitive unconscious engaged in world-destroying rebellion.

This terrifying activation of the unconscious is not resolved by abusive epithets levelled at those who have become possessed by it. We are more liable to survive the flood if we attempt to understand the manifestations of the unconscious, whether on the larger scale of world-events or in the sphere of individual psychology, as something essentially antithetical to our rationally conceived and ordered world. It is the unpredictable and irregular which now challenges our understanding.

Freud has attempted to read the riddle of the autonomous psyche with his comprehensive concept, wish-fulfilment. This conception can be regarded as a valuable pointer or directive principle, since we see that the power of the wish is, in fact, the ruling idea in primitive mentality. Indeed, the whole belief in witchcraft has developed from empirical observation of the incalculable power of the wish. Given the extreme suggestibility of the savage mind to certain classes of ideas, the power of suggestion has, in fact, an unlimited effect. That this is by no means limited to Africa and other uncivilised lands is shown by the fact that Hitler, using precisely the same means as the primitive medicine man, converted German inferiority and self-distrust into a well-nigh invincible force, by suggesting to the German people that they were the children of the pagan gods, that they had never been beaten in battle, that they were the Chosen People and that he stands in direct relation with the heavenly powers. What better example can history supply of the dynamic power of the wish? Without presuming to claim any precise etymological kinship between the words, it is literally true to say that Hitler has bewitched the German people by the magic of *witchcraft*.

To the rationalist mentality suggestion represents a kind of bogey. For better or for worse, it is in point of fact one of the most powerful instruments of consciousness and is in constant use in education, advertisement, public policy, preaching and propaganda. In spite of the fact that it is often abused by unscrupulous manipulators, its dynamic potentiality when properly appreciated and safeguarded makes it an invaluable means of guidance and control. The goal of self-discipline is also implemented in considerable measure by deliberate auto-suggestion. When some intellectual purist interrogates me anxiously as to the possibility of suggestion creeping into the analytical treatment, I reply that suggestion does not creep in; it is welcomed as a royal principle. Behind this fear of evil suggestion there lurks the whole sectarian fear that innocent people, in a plastic vulnerable state, are being got at for sinister power purposes. Even though it is admitted that devotion to the work of healing is not invariably accompanied by an adequate measure of self-criticism, yet the very need to achieve positive results will tend to ensure that those ideas will be brought out from the patient's material which carry the suggestion of healing and value. Why should one forego this most effective means of reaching the required goal? This positive use of suggestion is altogether different from hypnotic suggestion which always seeks to enter by the back door. I try to show my patients how to honour it as the means provided by nature for bringing about the rule of harmony and order in place of chaos.

At bottom, the fear of suggestion comes from the very reasonable fear of using primitive unconscious means. But people who have lost contact with their instinctive roots have to learn to go with and trust their nature and not assume that it is invariably evil. I cherish the hope therefore that science will some day accept the hypothesis that wisdom and understanding are more precious in the psychological field than a sterile attitude of exclusion. We have to know the truth of the psyche and this will always escape our grasp if we attempt to deal with it from the basis of distrust. In order to understand the pristine character and operation of the sympathetic nervous system we must not insist that its mode of functioning shall be identical with that of the brain and central nervous system with which consciousness is directly related. Like the autonomous psyche, its operation is fundamentally independent and we must therefore approach it with a sympathetic attitude.

The conscious function is under the directive control of the will, whereas the unconscious is the home of the wish or, to put it more correctly, instinctual striving. The antipathy which rationally

minded people have to anything coming immediately from the unconscious has to do with these unpredictable, independent, and amoral activities of the underside. A philosopher once said to me with passionate intensity: "If I find I want to believe a thing I know it must be false." We even suspect ourselves of wishful thinking when we allow our minds to dwell, for instance, upon the obvious instability of the enemy's morale. In both these examples we detect the firm resolution of consciousness not to be influenced by the primitive or childish character of the natural mind. But supposing what we wish to believe happens also to be true? And conversely, what if a certain aspect of scientific truth can be apprehended only by a correct appraisal of the power of the unconscious wish?

These questions bring me to the specific problem we are here to discuss, namely, the relation of the structural personality to the work of psychical research. Everyone who has ever had to do with mediumistic séances will have become aware of the peculiar tendency of the medium's so-called "controls" to become psychically sensitive to the most eminent, distinguished, or dynamic personality in the group. The medium tends to respond to the unconscious wish of this dominant personality and to give it voice in a transposed or symbolical fashion. It is almost as though the medium gave utterance to a dream-content of the psyche to which he had tuned in.

The wish or tendency may also be that of the whole group, or it may be merely a general expectation or curiosity. It may be that the *mana*¹ which clings to the significant personality produces a wish in the medium to become related to the *mana*-object in this oblique fashion. In Jung's paper on the *Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena*² this phenomenon of oblique relatedness is clearly discernible. For example, on one occasion after the medium (a girl of 15½) had evinced acute emotional symptoms in a somnambulistic trance, she awoke in a distraught and rather confused state of mind. She said she had seen all sorts of things but would tell nothing. Only after urgent questioning she related how with extraordinary clarity she had seen her grandfather arm-in-arm with Jung's grandfather. Later, in a detailed system of relationships, elaborated in a visionary retrospect of various incarnations, she discovered that in the eighth century she was the mother of her present father, of her grandfather and of Jung's grandfather. Hence the striking friendship of these two old gentlemen, who were otherwise strangers. Moreover, in the thirteenth century she was a certain

¹ A primitive energy-concept which connotes impressive or supernatural effect and is usually associated with some outstanding personality.

² C. G. Jung, *Collected Papers on Analytical Psychology*.

Mme. de Valours who was burnt as a witch. In this incarnation she had been Jung's mother.

In her waking state her adolescent personality was restricted by social, educational and personal factors from making the desired intimacy. The erotic transference could, therefore, exist only in a dissociated, repressed condition in the unconscious. Clearly this girl inherited a mediumistic capacity and the greater part of her psychology expressed itself in mediumistic ways. She had, in point of fact, very considerable potentiality existing in a more or less undeveloped state in the unconscious. At the period of the séances, this potential caused the unconscious to be preponderant in energy-value over the conscious. Because of their dissociation from consciousness, these personality-elements could appear only in a relatively timeless, mythological state. Once in the waking state after a trance she said: "I do not know if what the spirits say and teach me is true, neither do I know if they are those by whose names they call themselves, but that my spirits exist there is no question. I see them before me, I can touch them, I speak to them about everything I wish, as naturally as I am now talking to you. They must be real."¹

By pointing out the presence of this specific wishing potential in the unconscious of this medium I do not thereby mean to imply that the whole of the mediumistic phenomena described by Jung can be explained in terms of an unconscious erotic transference. This would be to fall into the fatal trap of the "nothing but" type of rationalisation. I merely seek to demonstrate that the dissociated potentialities in a relatively undeveloped personality exist under the condition of the wish. These contents have no integrated relation to consciousness and, therefore, can only come to expression in their own twilight world of the dream or trance. The transference creates a bridge of fantasy whereby the dissociated potential seeks to find a point of interest or attention in the objective world. Jung's personality, with all his dawning realisation of the importance of the unconscious, would clearly provide that point of commanding interest about which the whole mythological development could revolve.

From the standpoint of the girl medium's personal development, we could regard this as the phase of the transference, by means of which the developing ego is able gradually to assimilate the inherited potential in the unconscious. From the standpoint of individuation, however, we must conclude that the medium's attempt to relate to the unconscious contents of different personalities in the group in a more or less systematised unconscious way, could be a definite hindrance to the development of the medium's personality. Inasmuch

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 22.

as the expectation of the group tends to give a kind of cultural value to the dissociated condition it will hold the personality at a lower and less organised level of consciousness. From another point of view, it must be admitted that, by refining his faculty of adaptation to the subliminal and potential, rather than to the actual factors of the contemporary scene, the medium performs a valuable function.

The case of Hitler provides, however, a very significant example of the two-edged value of mediumship. Hitler has undoubtedly a mediumistic psychology. He was born at Braunau in Austria, the home of the well-known Schneider brothers. This coincidence lends colour to the possibility of a certain local suggestive influence which might favour mediumistic development. Whether this was so or not, there is abundant evidence to show that Hitler attained his formidable power over the German nation by acting as medium, as well as primitive medicine man, in relation to the German unconscious. On the other hand, we have watched his destructive attempt to obliterate the critical, structural aspect to German psychology and culture, in order to give unrestrained licence to the hitherto dissociated pagan elements of the racial unconscious. There could be no more eloquent example of the danger of permitting the amoral dissociated elements to become paramount in human affairs. This sudden unchecked eruption of the pagan myth, leading to the complete submergence or overwhelming of the previous conscious ideals, is essentially similar to an outbreak of acute mania. So long as consciousness adapts to the uprising urgency of the unconscious with insight, and more or less sympathetic control, a new structural integration is always possible. But when the repressed forces sweep everything before them and brook neither opposition nor control, catastrophe is due.

Another interesting fact about the nature of dissociated contents can be learned from the behaviour of the various voices, or personalities which take the stage in the mediumistic séance. As a rule the voice speaks with absolute authority. The note of the categorical imperative is unmistakable. In spite of the fact that these dissociated entities appear to want nothing better than to become related to the living, it is only with difficulty that they are taught to converse. Their style is that of downright affirmation, like Jahveh thundering from Sinai. On the first appearance of one of these so-called controls one often gets the impression of an attitude of intolerance towards any other spirit, as though two spirits of opposite character could not coexist in the same universe. Moreover, people like Joan of Arc, who are in the habit of listening to the voice of the unconscious, are inclined to accept its claim to absolute authority,

and are often prepared to suffer rather than admit even the possibility of their voice being mistaken.

Here again, then, we find a significant contrast between the condition of the dissociated complex and that of the conscious personality. The training of a disciplined personality very largely consists in learning to adapt to a number of disparate claims, tasks and expectations in the spirit of relativity. We try to create plans and systems in which these mutually antipathetic factors can be inter-related. In strong contrast to this mitigating principle of relativity, the dissociated complex is characterised by an absolutist all-or-none claim, a character which is also native to the child. Thus we see that the unconscious content enjoys the primordial simplicity of an unrelated existence, while consciousness is marked by its ability to create a complex co-ordination of related elements.

The labour of creating an increasingly complex system of adaptation represents a very serious strain on psychical resources. It is, therefore, intelligible that a number of individuals should recoil from the strain, even though escape means a relatively complete surrender to a psychotic or psycho-neurotic condition. On the other hand, there are, as we know, certain vital occasions when the terse simplicity of a categorical injunction is exactly what one needs. Many people inhabit a needlessly complicated world of cares, scruples and superfluous expectations. A strong pristine wind of affirmation, like the voice which said: "I am that I am", is needed to sweep away the clutter of neurotic reservations. People who try to create a too complicated or ideal conscious house are liable to become imprisoned in a defended fortress where they die of boredom. Similarly a marriage that aims at being ideal and perfect in all respects becomes an impossible burden for human nature to sustain.

The primitive unconscious insists on being admitted whether we like it or not, hence the wiser choice is to strive not for perfection, or for an ideal plan, but for totality. And in order to accept the totality of one's nature it is essential to give value to the specific needs, urgencies and potentialities which at first make their appearance in a more or less crude and dissociated form.

If I were to presume to apply these general considerations to the actual investigations of our Society, I would say that the primary factors to be considered are the psychological ones, both in respect to the actual human material of the medium (the degree, for instance, of conscious discipline and integration) and to the possibility of specific unconscious potentialities existing in other members of the investigatory group. The fact that these potentialities are liable to become apparent under the guise of wishing, or in some projected

form, is simply the inevitable condition native to dissociated complexes.

To my mind the real object of psychology at the present time is the unconscious or autonomous psyche, and if we are able to discover under what psychical conditions such phenomena as telepathy, exteriorisation of energy (*e.g.* poltergeists, mediumistic phenomena on the physical plane, etc.), phantasms of the living, precognition, etc., are liable to make their appearance, a most valuable contribution to science will be in our grasp. The practical difficulties, so far as I see them, reside in the fact that before we can reach even an approximate estimate of the psychological factors actually operative in any investigation of group phenomena, we should need to conduct a preliminary analytical survey of the medium as well as of each member of the investigating group. If, for example, in a preliminary survey of the dream-material of the individual participants we were to discover personalities which corresponded in general characteristics to those which appeared in the mediumistic séance, we should be in a position to equate the autonomous activity observed in the séance with certain specific urges or tendencies in the psychological sphere. Whether this method of approach would prove feasible in practice depends upon a degree of willingness which is not easily available; not because of any lack of devotion to truth, but rather because the idea of admitting the possibility of dissociation of personality-elements in oneself is liable to meet with determined resistance on the part of every rationally organised consciousness. What is beyond the limits of conscious introspection is still held to be non-existent by those who have not yet had the experience of being separated or prised away from the safeguarding limitations of their rational envelope.

It would be alien to the positive spirit of analytical psychology to discourage the enthusiasm for research which animates our Society. I simply wish to emphasise the psychological postulate that whenever and wherever the phenomena of dissociation are encountered we have to deal, not with the free denizens of the spirit-world, but with specific psychical factors belonging to analysable human subjects. That these factors can be constellated and brought to manifestation only under certain peculiar conditions pertains to the character of the dissociated state. In order, therefore, to be able to explore the whole field of so-called supernormal phenomena we need to extend our knowledge of the psychology of dissociation. With this end in view it is a pity that the deep investigation of human psychology has been till now almost exclusively in the hands of the doctors, since this has fostered the prejudice that dissociation

is invariably a pathological condition which ought not to exist. Inasmuch as every potential or emergent factor in the unconscious exists in a dissociated condition before it is realised and accepted by consciousness, it is clear that this consulting-room prejudice is frequently liable to obscure our vision of the real facts. It is to be hoped that we may eventually cleanse the medical mind of this prejudice in order that a clear collaboration between medical psychology and psychical research can become a realisable objective.